

Defense Logistics Agency

Transport of Polychlorinated Biphenyl-Containing Items from Japan and Wake Island to the United States

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION. The U.S. Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) proposes to transport to the United States, from military bases in Japan and Wake Island, approximately seven million pounds of obsolete electrical equipment and related materials (including liquids and packaging materials) containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB). Treatment and Disposal will be conducted in accordance with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved methods. Shipment by water is the preferred transportation mode; however, air shipment may also be used. This finding of no significant impact is based on an environmental assessment (EA) that incorporated the results of a public comment process.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION. DLA is responsible for disposing of excess Department of Defense (DoD) property for the U.S. Military Services. The U.S. Military Services in Japan and on Wake Island have an urgent need to dispose of obsolete electrical equipment that contains PCBs. There are no government-permitted PCB disposal facilities available to the DoD in Japan or on Wake Island. This equipment includes items manufactured in the U.S. and overseas. DLA estimates that 2.8 million pounds of such equipment, including packaging materials, are in storage in Japan and Wake Island, and another 4.3 million pounds are expected be removed from service during the next several years. Approximately 220,000 pounds of this equipment are stored on Wake Island. All of this equipment will eventually require disposal. Approximately 96 percent of the equipment and material currently in storage contains PCB concentrations of less than 50 parts per million, which is below the level regulated for disposal by the EPA in the United States.

ALTERNATIVES. The following three alternatives were evaluated in the EA:

Transport to the U.S. by Air and Subsequent Disposal (Alternative A): To transport all seven million pounds of material by air requires military transport aircraft flights over a period of approximately five years. The projected port of termination for the air shipments is Maxwell Air Force Base (AFB), Alabama. The EA provides that this material will be transported from Maxwell AFB by truck to DLA's current processing and disposal contractor in Pell City, Alabama. Transportation and disposal activities will be conducted in strict accordance with Department of Transportation (DoT) and EPA regulations, as described in Section 3.7 of the EA.

Transport to the U.S. by Water and Subsequent Disposal (Alternative B): Transportation by water requires shipping the material in commercial vessels over a period of several years as it is removed from service. The port of destination for the sea shipments will be

a U.S. West Coast port, as described in Section 3.7.2 of the EA. After reaching the port, the EA provides that this material will be transferred by truck to DLA's current processing and disposal contractor in Pell City, Alabama. Transportation and disposal activities will be conducted in strict accordance with DoT and EPA regulations.

No Action (Alternative C): Under this alternative the PCB equipment and material at the U.S. military installations in Japan and Wake Island will remain in storage indefinitely.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES. The accident risk for Alternatives A and B is very low. Neither transportation alternative is likely to result in an accidental release of PCBs or have a significant impact on the environment or public safety. As described in Section 4.0 of the EA, the calculated accident frequencies for both alternatives are very similar. The consequences of a transportation accident under either alternative, as discussed in EA Section 3.8, are considered minimal. Section 3.7 of the EA describes the precautions and risk mitigation factors that are part of the transportation process, including packaging, precautions at West Coast ports, the safety standards these shipments must comply with under both alternatives, and the level of Federal, state, and local contingency and emergency response planning.

Alternative C fails to address the adverse impact of the lack of adequate Military Service storage capacity in Japan. It does not address DoD concerns about the environmental impacts of long-term storage of this material, including degradation of the storage containers, and potential spills or releases due to material handling errors, accidents, severe weather or earthquakes. This alternative also does not address the tensions that long-term storage raises between U.S. installations and local Japanese communities. As such, Alternative C is not considered a feasible permanent solution for the continuing accumulations of this material.

The EA addresses reasonably foreseeable effects on air quality, water quality, natural resources, cultural resources, and environmental justice. It also addresses noise, material handling, storage considerations, and transportation methods. The EA concludes that neither Alternative A nor Alternative B will significantly affect the environment. Copies of the EA may be obtained by contacting the Defense Logistics Agency Public Affairs Office (Mr. Jack Hooper), DLA (DSS-CP), 8725 Kingman Road, Suite 2545, Fort Belvoir, VA 22060-6221, telephone (703) 767-5121. The EA may also be accessed via the Internet at <http://www.dla.mil/ea082802.asp>.

PUBLIC COMMENTS. On August 28, 2002, a Federal Register notice invited public comment on the draft EA for a period of 30 days. Two comments were received and were considered. The comments and DLA's responses are summarized in Appendix G of the final EA.

FINDING. Based on the EA, I conclude that the proposed action does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. Therefore, the proposed action will be implemented as soon as practicable.

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